

Acacia and CADE '98: A Report from Harker associates

June, 1998

Basic Elements:

- 2 Participants were invited from each of: Senegal, South Africa, Mozambique, and Uganda. *They were invited:*
- to attend the Distance Education Conference in the Banff Centre-May 21-24, 1998
- to spend up to one additional week in Canada visiting appropriate distance education facilities, Provincial or Federal programs or technical facilities providing distance education within Canada.

At the last minute, one of the South African participants, Ginger Bester of the Department of Education, was denied leave to travel. Thus the group was seven in number. Backgrounds of the participants are attached, and it can be seen that they vary from education specialists through technical specialists.

Some indicated in advance what they hoped to win from their Canadian experience; others did this as the exercise moved forward. In consequence, "plans" were kept as flexible as possible, though constraints imposed by fixed costs (primarily travel) dictated that "core" decisions, particularly as to city, were made and adhered to.

- The budget for the activity (including all travel costs and logistics) was set, and this limited the number of places the group could visit in person
- Attendance at the Distance Education Conference in Banff for the participants allowed for exposure to virtually all interested individuals (which was specifically required by the IDRC, as shown in the TORs, March 23, 1998)--the registration for the event was closed early as it was over-subscribed.
- The visits were both exploratory and structured: the participants were reminded to keep in mind the "fronts" around which Acacia centres its activity--infrastructure, tools for local content creation, applications related to community needs, and policy.

Places:

Participants were met in Toronto by Collin Harker of **Harker associates** and then travelled to **Calgary** by air before proceeding to **Banff** via ground transportation. As it happened, the two Senegalese participants did not make their transatlantic connection, but they did arrive in Banff a few hours later than the others.

Accommodation had been reserved at the Ptarmigan Inn on the recommendation of the Banff Centre, and given that Harker associates had secured a corporate room rate at the Ptarmigan Inn of \$69 per night, the group were very happy with arrangements.

Though the conference was held in Banff, the host/arranger was actually Athabasca University-- which was very supportive in terms of facilitating registration for the Acacia group. The process of securing registration was initiated when the contract between IDRC and Harker associates was signed, but this was almost not soon enough. The press on places meant that registration was effectively closed (though without public notification) very early in the game. **Perhaps the IDRC should consider, on any future occasion, the wisdom of it acting immediately to secure tentative reservations for incoming groups, which could then be assumed by whoever is organizing the trip.** For our part, Harker associates will check into reservation problems prior to contract-signing should it be asked to arrange something along these lines again.

Fortunately, all concerned, including the administrators at Athabasca, were as helpful as possible. Athabasca is very involved with DE, and **Jon Baggaley**, who holds a Chair in Educational Technology, has had an involvement with the IDRC. He was one of those who helped ensure that our group could be registered, and helped arrange meetings between the Acacia group and the Athabasca participants at the conference, though he was out of Canada at the time of the event.

The group covered many of the formal conference sessions, and met with key actors, including some who were scheduled to meet them during the "tour" stage. In addition, materials were collected, and most of these are provided along with this report. The participants took with them their own copies of everything available. The conference organizers at Athabasca University have asked for future contact details for the participants and have confirmed that they intend to keep them updated with DE developments as these become known to Athabasca.

Following the conference, the first stop on the itinerary was **Vancouver**. In this city, the programme was mostly taken up by the Open Learning Agency, a BC crown corporation promoting distance education in both the formal and informal settings, among other things. A visit was also paid to the Commonwealth of Learning, a Commonwealth institution headquartered in Vancouver and active on distance education in Africa.

The Open Learning Agency is undergoing changes: the BC provincial education department's unit for DE has now been merged into the Agency as the "Open School", and its management were keen to help with the visit of the IDRC group. **Dr. Arthur Fallick**, Manager of Field Services, took charge of the visit, and Harker associates recommends that **IDRC/Acacia keep him in mind as a useful contact for further relations. He is both enthusiastic and able..**

The COL, which sponsored a group of DE experts from the Caribbean to attend the CADE conference, was interesting to the group primarily for what they learned there about the focus

being placed on the use of radio in Distance Education.

Though many efforts were made, it proved impossible to arrange a formal contact between the African and Caribbean participants while they were at the CADE conference, but some informal one-on-one contacts did prove possible.

Here, before relating details of the subsequent stops on the "tour", it is appropriate that an observation be made about the concept itself. Harker associates saw more clearly as the follow-on stage developed the wisdom of linking participation in a structured event to an opportunity to cross the country, meeting sometimes the same and sometimes different actors, getting a feel for what could otherwise have been rather detached impacts. The conference, as the Proceedings indicate, confronted participants with an almost overwhelming volume and range of experiences and initiatives. It was undoubtedly useful to the participants, as their evaluative reflections show, but perhaps its greatest utility was as the underpinning for meeting a diverse group of Canadian actors, working in different settings. **Though there are always times when it makes sense to focus on one particular objective or opportunity, we feel that the IDRC/Acacia should, when contemplating how to expose African actors to Canadian or other foreign experience, keep in mind the benefit of linking participation in a conference with the opportunity to get around and see people and problems in situ.** This helps the organization get more value for its spending, and certainly impacts positively on the dynamics so essential to ensuring that the participants absorb much of what they will encounter.

The "group dynamics" in this instance were very positive, and this prevailed across the breadth of the country; their next stop was **Toronto**, which offered useful opportunities and served as the base for a "field trip". This was to Hamilton (an industrial setting for distance education) and Niagara Falls.

The joint labour-management human resources sector council for the steel industry, CISTEC, wished to host a meeting for the group. CISTEC has developed course work and relationships with colleges as delivery mechanisms for skills upgrading in the industry, and is now seriously considering moving into Distance Education. The CEO, **George Nakitsas**, believed that a discussion of DE between his staff and the IDRC group would be beneficial to both sides, and arranged for the group to visit a union resource centre in Hamilton as a precursor to a tour of an automated steel plant, where re-skilling requires use of CBL approaches and, for the future, Distance Education. Initially, there was some scepticism about "educators" going into a working steel mill, but the visit helped each of them focus on just what their involvement in education was meant to link up with, and in fact, the visit restored energies where, because of the demands of travelling across Canada, these were beginning to lag. Following the plant tour, the group visited Niagara Falls.

In Toronto itself, meetings were arranged with the active involvement of **May Maskow**, outgoing President of CADE. She was quick to confirm both her interest in meeting the group at the conference and in ensuring they visited the Open College, which is breaking ground in the offering of university-level credit courses by distance education. The participants clearly saw

value in the Ryerson approach, about which most of them took materials to ponder in their home locations.

Montreal was the next stop on the schedule. This centred around a visit to the Tele-universite building for meetings with the university as well as Canal Savoir CFTU 29 and REFAD. **Mark Schofield**, Secretary -Treasurer of the CADE, (whose son works at ROSA) handled the particular arrangements.

From Montreal, the group travelled by ground transportation to **Ottawa**, where the evaluation and debriefing were to take place. But more was accomplished. The University of Ottawa is doing work on French language community education using compressed video, and both of the Senegalese participants are involved in research collaboration with the U. of O. Professor **Pierre Michaud**, who was pleased to receive the group, and later accompany them to their next stop.

This was a visit to Industry Canada to see Canada's SchoolNet in action and learn about its future plans. The arrangements were made by **David Gazsi**, Assistant Director of SchoolNet's international marketing arm, who conducted the briefing.

The Acacia team has indicated a desire to firm up contacts with, among others, the CLC, which is active in sub-Saharan Africa. The CLC agreed to provide the facilitation for the final, evaluation, session and a report on that event follows.

Evaluation:

Paul Puritt of the Canadian Labour Congress orchestrated the self-introduction of participants, and suggested that as a first step, the visitors spell out what they had hoped to accomplish during the visit to Canada.

The first to speak was Mr. Sall, from Senegal. For him, there were two main objectives. 1) the use of technology in education, and 2) long distance learning. The others were subsidiary, but important, a) teacher training in long distance learning, b) assessment of DE, and c) the relationship between education and life long learning. In all these areas he wanted a comparison with his home experience.

Next to speak was Kauxique Maganlal from Mozambique. He wanted to learn from Canadians involved in the use of Information and Communication strategies in DE.

Next was Rokhaya Ndoeye, also of Senegal, who said she wanted exposure to problems in the combination of DE and new technology, and ideas for how to develop strategies for implementing this combination, concentrating on community based non-formal education.

Juliana Bbuye, from Uganda, wanted to see first-hand a more experienced DE community, which

Canada has. Her interests were in the incorporation of multimedia, from traditionally print based, in the state of student support services for DE students, and the introduction of DE to communities. She wanted to get closer to realizing partnerships.

Hilario Siteo, from Mozambique, outlined three main foci, 1) higher education, 2) DE, and 3) curriculum development. He also wanted to witness video conferencing setups, and the use of certain applications, such as MS office.

Wilson Sitonik from Kenya was next, and wanted to see generally the state of DE in Canada. He also wanted to see different alternative modes of delivery, and get ideas on grading and quality control, how the internet is being used, and what part it is playing. What the costs are, relative to formal education, also interested him.

Denis Brandjes, the South African participant, was next, and he wanted to know who the major players are in this field, and also the available modes of delivery. How is technology being used, and how can it be used, and is it practically feasible in places that are not so technologically driven as Canada? Also, he wanted to know whether this high-tech DE is occurring on a large scale or still as pilot projects. His main pre-occupations are with supporting infrastructure, content development, h.r.d., and the linking of these.

This introductory phase was followed by reflections upon the achievement or not of these stated objectives.

Sall was again first, as he was due to leave for the airport sooner than the others. The visit gave him confidence and optimism, and he felt that it showed him that a lot can be done with the technology he currently has in Senegal. As for negatives, he only acquired a feel for assessment, and this was perhaps not deep enough, and the same was true concerning his interest in teacher training. He now feels that formal education is fading in Canada, and the non-formal sector is growing, but not much was said on this point.

Kauxique Maganlal observed that he had seen the same technical systems in Canada as at home, but here the institutions work together. While at home they do not have the best technology, they have some, and he now feels it can be used to better effect. His main point was about the cooperation between government, financial institutions, universities and private sector. He had been very impressed by the exposure to the electronic delivery of materials, and would like to see how this can improve co-operation.

Rokhaya Ndoye said she had learned a lot. There were so many new things she had never seen, such new developments, and a real movement was obviously taking shape. She saw interesting links between high technology and basic education, and it helped her consolidate her knowledge through exposure to others. She saw examples of how to combine peda/andra-gogy and new technologies. And learned how to reduce her fear about these new technologies. She saw that this combination requires collaboration. The importance of English to DE in Canada was clear, and

though her command of the language improved greatly, the tour was perhaps not bilingual enough. The guide spoke to her in French, but presentations were almost always in English.

Next was Juliana Bbuye, who saw how technologies are being used, and how none are really used exclusively, and she concluded that a mix provides the best results. She also saw that you can choose your own media. The importance of telecentres came across, and how technology is attractive to the youth. Telecentres in rural areas can maybe help keep them there, and she sees the big problem for youth in Uganda is that they are always running to the cities and becoming hawkers. She also saw the strength of partnerships, and the value of them, and how the Internet is an important delivery mechanism. At home, they need strengthened co-operation to make use of all resources, and Acacia is helping with this.

Hilario Siteo found good technological models of DE in Canada. He believes that DE is poli-pedagogi-technical, and these factors must all be included to develop appropriate curricula and maintain student-teacher interaction. He saw the technician's responsibility as being to make accessible the technology. The important factors for him were organization, partners, appropriate hard and soft ware, bibliographical resources, sharing information as it is a social possession, and using many different forms of communication. He saw video conferencing as one of the best means of DE, but was put off by its very expensive communication requirements. Compuconferencing is cheaper, and the Internet is also important, as a source too. He mentioned the idea of intensive short courses, a month or two in length, and running this as a pilot project. There are some problems at home that impeded the use of ICTs, but he wanted to try and use this trip to get DE going in Mozambique.

Wilson Sitonik said that most of the focus was on higher education, and that we should realize that there are a lot of people doing things in this field, and not each try to do everything separately. He saw a lot of new things, and realized that a vast wealth of materials and techniques have been developed, and that there is a big and committed DE community hard at work in Canada. He saw a lot of simple projects, and says we should not forget the simple means, such as radio, crank radio(no batteries required), and that with all the technology, print is still the king. The cost of phones here is nothing compared to Africa. He would like to see development and concentration on basic literacy education. The trip made him think about what he should be borrowing, and about the course they at home are taking, and what courses they are designing, and what they should or could be doing. He had also wanted to see the costs, and didn't really do so, and to see if these could be lowered enough to make them appropriate and available. He said we saw the finished product, but not enough about how those who did it got to where they were to do it. He had concerns about ensuring quality in DE because it is still seen with suspicion by the faculty community, and about grading. He saw a Canadian zeal and desire to work. As concerns the access to huge amounts of information, something bad always comes with something good, witness the Internet and who controls it and gets input and cultural content. Then there is the role of private sector, and what do they expect for their trouble? He saw that

work has been done, and that there are pioneers who are determined to make it work. In Kenya, study abroad is a drain on foreign reserves and constitutes a brain drain. DE may be a means of keeping them at home, but we also have to think about what will happen to society if they stay. The thing he wants to ensure is that what this group learned gets out to the communities.

Denis Brandjes was next and commented that the final program was only seen by him shortly before he left home, so he did not really know what to expect, and was very positively surprised. It broadened his mind. The question for him was how technology can be used in education, and whether it was really feasible? And especially on a mass basis. The answer he got was a YES, here, but there is the question of life after the pilot at home in Africa. This field involves many aspects, and he said most sites were not multi-dimensional, other than the OLA in Vancouver, where many aspects were integrated. He saw the infrastructure and h.r.d for K-12, which gave him a model for his implementation at home. Interesting also was the government situation here; it is both a help and hindrance not to have one national ministry of education, as the strengths of this are strong provinces that are involved in making initiatives more regionally flavoured. The trip was also a good meeting of different African situations. The idea of new technology is for him now tempered by the use of alternative/older technologies; he is refocusing due to this exposure.

Some Negatives:

The group did not speak to students, nor to the receivers of DE as much as to the providers. So they were not able to fully understand just what is the community reaction to ICT's and DE.

Other outcomes:

The group saw simple uses of some of the technologies as useful examples. It was clear that in their own countries they must find new partners to work with in what the communities are doing and want outside help with.

Some Comments:

An IDRC staffer noted that Acacia was focused on motivating at the community level, which prompted the observation that there is within the IDRC still a debate about Acacia: One thrust was to ensure that Africa kept up with ICT's, and did so more on its own terms, and the other was a desire to offer Canadian models. The project could be understood as an occasion to enable African DE leaders to put that in perspective: ensuring African ownership but grounding it in a realistic appreciation of what was or might be available. It was regretted that the group could not see other settings, such as the aged, disabilities, racial minorities, some of the situations which Canadians are working on, but not by any means with unblemished success at this time. It would be a mistake to assume Canada "has got it figured out".

The group was encouraged to appreciate the offering, but also to be wary of being oversold something glossy and empty, which certainly was not the IDRC's intention but is a fact of life in the ICT world. There would hopefully be opportunities for participants to play back what they had learned to Acacia and thus help direct what happens next to this important initiative.

Since the departure of the participants, a number of them have been in positive communication with Harker associates, and copies are attached as Appendix 3. More importantly, there are early signs of communication among the participants themselves, and Acacia should note the initiative here being shown by Denis Brandjes, the head of the Acacia-supported SchoolNet South Africa. Harker associates sees this as a sign that Acacia is impacting on the culture of ICT use in Africa, and **believes that the momentum earned by the CADE project should be harnessed through Acacia's commitment to networking/interactive discussion.** We are ready to assist with this, and are willing to undertake assignments similar to the one currently being reported. This offer of service is extended to the IDRC both with respect to Acacia, given the expertise we have on African issues, and with respect to other regions of the world. Our associates are capable of working in or on any area of interest.

H.J. Harker, June 15, 1998

Appendix 1: Financial Report

The Budget for this project was set at \$48,530 plus fees (\$20,000) and appropriate taxes. The project actually cost \$48,266.58 plus fees and GST(\$21,400) for an total of \$69,666.58.

The itemised Budget and Expenditure statement follows. All supporting receipts and documentation are attached.

	Budgeted	Expended
Consultant:		
Travel within Canada		
Airfare (2x\$2,000)	\$4,000	\$690.71
Per Diem (1x15x\$158)	\$2,370	\$1,580
Transit (2x\$60)	\$120	\$0 ¹
subtotal	\$6,490	\$2,270.71

¹ Given the burden of internal ground travel involved with this project, this item was rolled into ensuring adequate coverage of these costs for the whole group.

African participants:

Airfare:		
2xEntebbe	\$7,200	\$8,134.68
2xJo'burg	\$6,600	\$5,380.40 ²
2xDakar	\$6,600	\$6,126.55
2xMaputo	\$7,890	\$8,832.90 ³
Per Diem (8x10x\$158)	\$12,640	\$11,692 ⁴
Transit Allowance (8x\$150)	\$1,200	\$0 ⁵
Ground Transport, Airport Fees Etc	\$0	\$1,977.34 ⁶
Conference Registration	\$0	\$3,852 ⁷
sub-total	\$42,040	\$45,995.87

²One of the participants, Ginger Bester, dropped out at the last minute. His ticket is non-refundable (see Documentation)

³Includes cost incurred when a replacement was named, and accepted, for Vice-Minister Martins of Mozambique.

⁴One participant failed to attend; one was granted an extra day, and one was granted three extra days.

⁵See Footnote 1. This amount was rolled over into payment for all Ground Transportation. The group felt this was the best way to proceed, given the high costs involved. These costs are covered in a separate item.

⁶This item is presented as a Schedule following the presentation of the Financial report.

⁷Item authorized as a Contract Amendment. See Documentation.

Overall Total	\$48,530	\$48,266.58
Fees, inc. GST	\$21,400	\$10,700
Advance		\$41,000
Amount payable to Harker associates		\$7,266.58 plus \$10,700 (Fees and GST)

Schedule: Ground Transportation and Related Costs

Calgary Airport to/from Banff	\$495.00
Coach, Montreal to Ottawa	\$243.18
Taxis	\$546.10
Van Rental, Toronto	\$79.24
Airport Taxes, Van. and Montreal	\$110
Parking, Montreal	\$11
Health Insurance requested by participants	\$87
Canadian visas	405.82**
Total	\$1,977.34

**Receipts are provided for all items shown in this schedule Except in the case of the re-imburement for Visa costs. Some are included: M. Rowan paid for the visas for the two Mozambicans, and she was re-imbursed by Harker associates. Other participants provided a copy of their bill and asked for, and received, cash from Harker associates. Two individuals have promised to provide receipts, but at the time of closing, these have not been obtained. Thus, where no receipts are available, we ask for \$50 per person, which is \$25 less than actual costs.

Appendix 2: Participants

Mrs. Juliana Bbuye
 Makerere University
 Department of Distance Education
 p.o. box 7062
 Kampala, Uganda
 tel: 256 41 543251
 fax: 256 531 896
 email: avumuk@imul.com;

Juliana is the Assistant Head of the Department of Distance Education at the Makerere University of Uganda. She has experience as a teacher at secondary and post-secondary levels, and presently has a focus on Student Support services for DE. She has attended and co-ordinated several international conferences and workshops on the organization of Distance Learning, and her main interests in this field are student support services, the integration of new media into DE programmes, and the production of print materials.

Mrs. Rokhaya Thioune N'Doye
 Coordinatrice du Programme des Ecoles Communautaire de Base
 4164 Dakar, Senegal
 BP 10816 Dakar
 tel/fax: 221 824 90 91
 email: biblicad@ucad.sn
 email: thioune@ucad.sn

Rokhaya works with l'Association pour le Developpement de l'Education et de la Formation en Afrique. She is co-ordinator of community basic schools. These are an alternative model of non-formal education for young children, aged 9-15. This project has led to collaboration with the Ecole normale superieure in Dakar and the Faculty of Education at the University of Ottawa on DE. She is specially interested in ICT's in education, and in studying applications of these technologies in DE.

Denis Brandjes
 SchoolNet South Africa

p.o. box 865
 Auckland Park 2006
 South Africa
 tel/fax: 27 11 477 9168
dgb@school.za

Denis is the Director of SchoolNet South Africa; he was formerly a teacher in a Johannesburg high school, and was involved in the development of ICT facilities at the school. He helped to develop regional and local networks, and has now left teaching to be further involved in SchoolNet SA and the provincial network in Gauteng. His key interests are ICT's in education and how technology can enhance the learning process.

Kauxique Maganlal
 IT Engineer at Ministry of Education
 Maputo, Mozambique
 tel: 258 1 490 677
 fax: 258 1 492 196
 email: Kauxique@mined.uem.mz

Kauxique is the computer science engineer at the ministry; he has been a participant in its collaboration with other bodies on the introduction of ICT's in secondary schools, and helped develop the Ethernet network, including drafting protocols and installing network software. His special interests are software application for educational and research purposes, and the experience of the public sector in ICT development.

Hilario Siteo
 Informatics Centre of Eduardo Mondlane University
 Campus Universitário
 Julius Nyerere Avenue, 257
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Hilario works in the Computer Science for Higher Education unit at the Universidade Eduardo Mondlane in Maputo. He is interested in multimedia and hypermedia, including hardware and applications; classroom and laboratory networks, including tools which help administrators, teachers, and students share information and ideas; curriculum integration; and role reversal in ICT uses.

Dr. Wilson Kipsang Sitonik
 Advanced Information Technology and Economics Consultants (AITEC)

20th floor, Anniversary Towers
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Nairobi, Kenya
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fax: 254 02 215 633

Wilson is an information systems consultant, particularly interested in the application of ICT's in building the knowledge base for development policies. He is preparing to organize a national census for Kenya, and is very interested in how ICT's have been used in Canadian experience.

Hamidou Nacuzon Sall
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ENS - Universite de Dakar
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Hamidou is Directeur du Laboratoire Informatique-Education at the Ecole normale superieure in Dakar. He is primarily interested in the role of distance education in the training of teachers, and wants exposure to Canadian practices in this regard. He is also collaborating with the University of Ottawa on a research project relating to DE.

Appendix 3: Communications from Participants

See Emails forwarded to Ronald Archer, IDRC